▼▼▼CHAPTER 13

Military Service

In this chapter we will look at the military service of African-Americans in all of America's military conflicts, except the Civil War. We discussed the Civil War in an earlier chapter. Although we will concentrate on African-American soldiers with direct South Carolina connections, we will also review the history of African-American soldiers in general. This is for two reasons.

First, because nearly half of all Africans entered the nation through Charleston, odds are that almost half the African-Americans in military service have some South Carolina connection. If they themselves did not live in the state, then quite possibly their mothers or fathers or some other ancestor at least passed through the Palmetto State.

The second reason is even more important. Few people know this history. It has been all but ignored. We should understand that what African-Americans from South Carolina contributed was not unusual. African-Americans from all over the nation were making the same kind of sacrifices. We owe them all a great debt. After all, we may come from many places, but we are all Americans.

Why is military service important? Americans have almost always seen military service as both an obligation and a right of citizenship. How is it an obligation? Many people believe that if you benefit from living in a nation, you have a duty to help with its defense. For a democracy to survive, citizens must be willing to pay the price of defending it.

How is military service a right of citizenship? All citizens, if they are equal under the law, have an equal right to serve. If someone is not seen as equal under the law, he or she may not be allowed to serve. So the right to serve becomes even more important. If you think about it, one of the most important ways a person can claim full citizenship is to serve his or her nation in time of war.

The experience of African-Americans in general and South Carolina African-Americans in particular illustrates this idea. As you will see in this chapter, the history of African-American service in the military has one main theme. With a few important exceptions, African-Americans were saying that if they served and fought and died and proved themselves, other Americans must surely accept them as full citizens. If they were accepted as full citizens, then they would have all the blessings of liberty that other people have.

As you will see, African-Americans did all they could to make a strong claim that they loved their nation as much as anyone. In fact, half the battle was just trying to get the chance to prove this. Time and time again, African-Americans were denied the right to serve. However, when they did serve, their willingness to give their lives for their nation was not in doubt.

Sadly, as is the case with much of African-American history, the books left out the exploits of many brave men and women. As a result, their claims to full citizenship became much easier to ignore and reject. Unfortunately, many whites did ignore African-American military service. The time has come to give credit where credit is due.

Colonial America

We begin our story before there was a United States to defend. African-Americans helped defend the property and lives of white Americans in South Carolina long before they had any realistic hope of freedom for themselves. In 1708, enslaved African-Americans worked as mounted soldiers outside Charleston to protect the cattle and the settlement from Indian raids. In 1747, the South Carolina colonial legislature rec-

ognized this help. They passed a resolution of thanks. "In times of war, (they) behaved themselves with great faithfulness and courage, in repelling the attacks of his Majesty's enemies."

Despite this thanks, the state's leaders did not trust their enslaved soldiers. Whites made certain that the state militia had two armed whites for each armed black. This meant that if enslaved African-Americans did revolt against whites, the whites would outnumber them two to one.

The Revolutionary War

African-Americans served with distinction in the American Revolution. However, most of their service as combat soldiers on the American side was in the North. One of the first Americans to die in the cause, if not the very first, was Crispus Attucks, an African-American. British troops killed him when they fired on civilians in what became known as the Boston Massacre. A number of enslaved and free African-Americans served with the Minutemen at the beginning of the war in Massachusetts. They fought at Bunker Hill. African-Americans fought the British on both land and sea. They helped John Paul Jones in the Navy. Many served as pilots for boats in the Chesapeake Bay. Others fought as "privateers" on the high seas attacking the British Navy and merchant ships. Two African-American soldiers were with George Washington when he crossed the Delaware River to surprise the Hessian troops. Many Northern units were integrated. Blacks marched and fought alongside whites. After the battle of Yorktown, one reviewing officer had only high praise for the African-American troops. He noted that three-fourths of the regiment from Rhode Island were African-Americans. Compared to other regiments, he said, it was the neatest in dress and the best in military drills and maneuvers.

One great incentive for service in Northern states was the promise of freedom. For example, New York promised freedom to all enslaved African-Americans who signed up to fight for three years on the American side. The state would give their owners land in return. By the end of the war, almost all states, especially those in the North, were making similar offers. This greatly reduced the number of enslaved people in the northern parts of the nation. The bravery and sacrifice of African-Americans during the war encouraged abolitionists. It helped lead Northern states to completely end enslavement after the war.

Sadly, the story in South Carolina was quite different. The Continental Congress, George Washington, and one of South Carolina's more progressive military officers, Colonel John Laurens, all urged the state to take up the offer made by the nation's wartime government. The government promised to pay owners $1,000 for every enslaved African who became a soldier. When the war was over, the soldier would be freed and receive $50. Only South Carolina and Georgia completely rejected this plan. A number of enslaved African-Americans in these states ran away. They joined American revolutionary forces as soldiers in other states.

In South Carolina the major role African-Americans played in helping the American forces was as labor and support. It was not voluntary. Nevertheless, the labor of African-Americans was critical to the success of the revolutionaries. The state hired enslaved African-Americans from their owners to help build and man defenses. They erected forts around Charleston harbor. These included the two-layer Palmetto log walls on the fortifications on Sullivan's Island, later named Fort Moultrie. Those logs repelled the cannon balls of attacking British ships. In honor of that victory, South Carolina added a Palmetto tree to the state flag.

African-Americans served as firemen for Charleston when British ships shelled the city. They took the lead ornaments off buildings in Charleston and melted them into lead shot for muskets. Each cannon protecting Charleston had two African-Americans helping to man it. Even Francis Marion, known as the "Swamp Fox," counted among his men a number of African-Americans who served as scouts and in support roles.

African-Americans who belonged to white loyalists found themselves treated as the spoils of war. When the owners were unable to escape with the people they had enslaved, the Revolutionary Army often captured African-Americans. White officers put captured enslaved people to work as forced labor. They often kept them as their personal property after the war. Enslaved people captured from loyalist plantations in South Carolina were given to white American soldiers as an enlistment bonus. Both sides engaged in this practice. Enslaved African-Americans

captured by the British were sometimes kept by British officers. The British gave others to loyalist plantation owners who had lost the people they had enslaved to the American revolutionaries.

Just as in the case of white Americans, blacks fought on both sides in the war. The British appealed to enslaved peoples to join them and fight on their side. In return, they promised to free the enslaved people. This was very attractive to enslaved African-Americans in South Carolina and Georgia. They could not win their freedom fighting for the American revolutionaries. White owners threatened with harsh punishment any who took up this British offer. But many took the risk anyhow. They also believed the slogan, "Give me liberty or give me death!" One estimate is that between 1775 and 1783, at least 25,000 enslaved African-Americans in South Carolina alone fled to freedom. They fought on the side of the British as "shock troops" leading the charge against the Americans. Shock troops were those who charged first, and drew most of the firepower from the opponents. As a result, they usually suffered many more casualties than the troops that followed them. They also served as spies, guides, and skilled laborers. When the British left following their defeat, 20,000 African-Americans in British service left with them.

One group of African-Americans who fought on the British side stayed behind and remained a military force. They called themselves the "King of England's Soldiers." Hiding in fortifications in the swamps along the Savannah River, they carried on their own private guerrilla war at night against those who enslaved other African-Americans. They disappeared during the day. The combined militias of South Carolina and Georgia needed several years to finally drive them from the swamps.

By the end of the Revolutionary War, more than 5,000 African-Americans had risked their lives for the revolution. They fought for the political freedom of the revolutionary white Americans and for their own freedom in many cases. Ironically, the white Americans writing the new United States Constitution a few years after the war treated African-Americans as property rather than citizens.

The War of 1812—The Battle of New Orleans

The role of African-Americans in the War of 1812 with Great Britain was similar to their role in the Revolutionary War. Once again, many free African-Americans served in units from northern regions of the nation. Again, the government promised freedom at the end of their term of service.

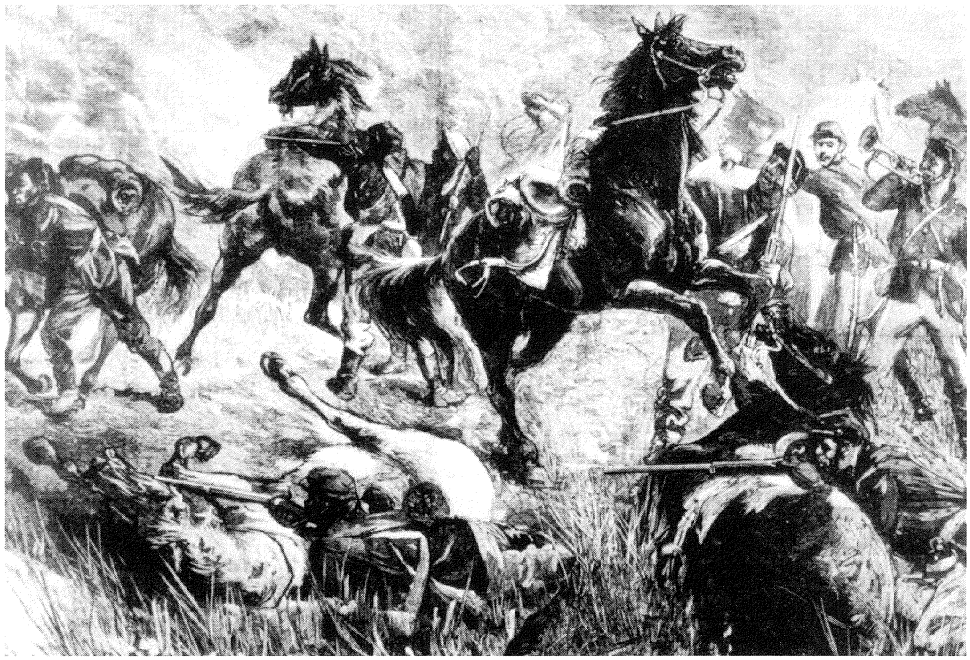
African-Americans had the most impact in naval battles. Some historians estimate that as many as one out of every ten sailors fighting in the Great Lakes were African-Americans. Following the Battle of Lake Erie, Admiral Perry said that his African-American sailors "seemed absolutely insensitive to danger." One captain spoke of an African-American sailor who had been hit by a twenty-four pound cannon shot. His dying words to his comrades were, "Fire away my boys." Another who was dying asked his shipmates to throw him overboard so he would not be in the way.

At the Battle of New Orleans, where Andrew Jackson won fame as a military commander, African-Americans played a major role. They fought beside regular white troops, turning back the main British assault on their position. They won particular praise in fights that led up to the main battle. Andrew Jackson told them that "the American Nation shall applaud your valor, as your general now praises your ardor."

The War of 1812 has one final similarity with the Revolutionary War. Once again the British tried to use the promise of freedom to lure enslaved African-Americans to their side. The numbers were not nearly as great as in the Revolutionary War, but some did risk their lives for freedom. According to records, once-enslaved people found safe haven living on British soil in Canada and the British West Indies in the period after the war was over.

How the West Was Won

Most people do not associate African-Americans with the conquest of the Indians in the American West. We do not get to see many African-Americans as soldiers doing battle with the Indians on television or in the movies. However, if these "cowboy and Indian"



(Left) African-American Cavalry under fire in the American West. Courtesy William Loren Katz, Collection, Ethrac Publications, 231 W. 13th St. N.Y., N.Y. 10011. (Facing Page) The Black Seminole Scouts, one of the most famous fighting forces during the battles with the plains Indians in the late 1800s. Courtesy of William Loren Katz, Collection, Ethrac Publications, 231 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.

shows were really accurate, we would see many African-Americans among the U.S. Cavalry. One estimate is that as many as one out of every five soldiers fighting in the West was an African-American.

The name the Indians, or Native Americans, gave African-American troops was "buffalo soldiers." Native Americans saw African-American's dark and typically curly hair as similar to the hair on buffaloes. The famed all African-American Tenth Cavalry adopted the name "buffalo soldiers." With great pride they placed it on their military crest. Their service was so impressive that eleven African-Americans in their ranks even received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

One of the most feared groups of African-American soldiers was the "Black Seminole Scouts." These were the descendants of African-Americans who escaped enslavement. Most of them came from Georgia, but some of them may have escaped from South Carolina. They went to Florida where they joined the Seminole Indians and intermarried among them. Here, they helped the Seminoles successfully fight off the U.S. military for many years. Eventually they moved West with the Indians. They went to Mexico when whites tried to reenslave them. There they joined forces with the Mexican Army. Word spread far and wide about their great fighting skills.

In 1870 a U.S. general, knowing of their reputation as great scouts and fighters went to Mexico. He persuaded the Black Seminoles to help the U.S. Army in their war with the Indians in the American plains. With the promise of land and food, they and their families came North. They soon became known as one of the most successful fighting units in the West. They had a dozen major battles and never lost a single man. They survived in the desert on nothing but canned peaches and rattlesnake meat. In one skirmish, three scouts and their commander attacked a war party of thirty Indians. They won the battle and lost only the officer's horse. The three scouts won Congressional Medals of Honor.

Sadly, the U.S. Government broke its promise to the Black Seminole Scouts, just as it broke so many promises to Native Americans. The Scouts did not get the land or food for their families they were promised. Even worse, one of them, a Medal of Honor winner, was shot in the back by a Texas sheriff at a New Year's Eve dance. The 200 men and women, who had come back to help after being driven out of the country, once again packed their belongings and left the United States. This time it was for good.

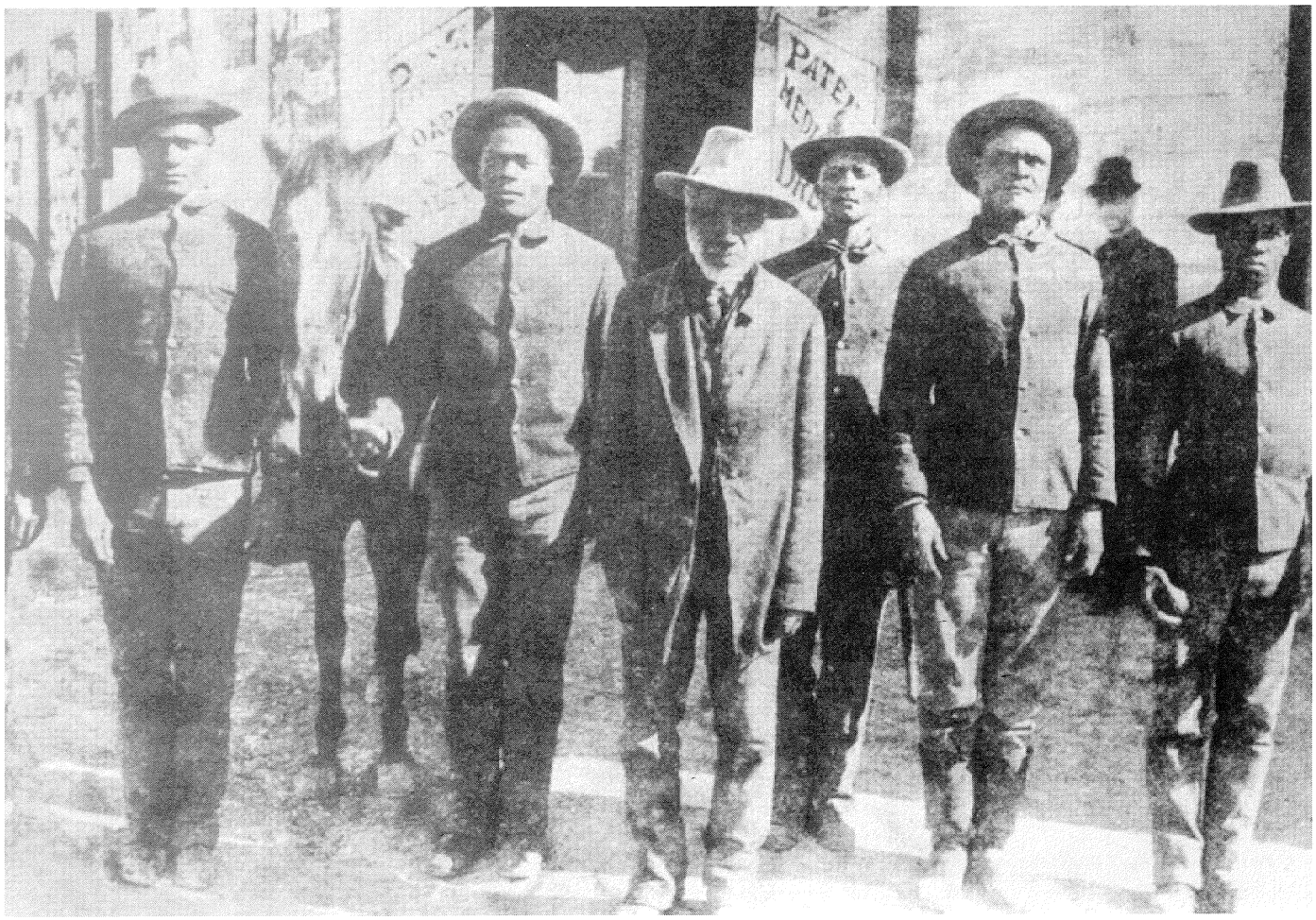
One of the saddest things about African-American involvement in the Western Indian wars is that both they and the Indians suffered the prejudice of white Americans. The Indians seemed aware of this. They felt a strange sense of kinship with these "buffalo soldiers" who helped to defeat them. At the Battle of Little Big Horn, the only one of General Custer's

men not scalped was Isaiah Dorman, an African-American scout who was also part Indian. The Indians said that he belonged to the Indians but happened to be among the soldiers.

The First African-American West Point Cadet

While the U.S. military was willing to allow African-Americans to sacrifice their lives in defense of the nation, it was unwilling to allow them to be officers. White officers commanded virtually all African-American troops until the late 1800s. The U.S. military did not give African-Americans the chance to prove they could lead as well as follow. After persistent efforts, the military allowed a few to try. Once again, the odds were greatly against them. They had to endure the usual hardships and harsh discipline. They also had to survive the hatred of all their fellow officers.

In the late 1800s, West Point allowed twenty African-Americans to enter as cadets. The first to attempt this nearly impossible feat was James W. Smith of South Carolina. Unfortunately, West Point expelled him for hitting a fellow cadet on the head with a large serving spoon. The cadet had insulted him beyond what he could endure. One of the worst cases took place in 1880 after Johnson Whittaker of Camden survived two years of rough treatment at West Point. Then white cadets tied him to his bed. They slashed his ears and shaved his head. But the school expelled him, not his tormenters. West Point found him guilty of supposedly injuring himself and then accusing others. Finally, in 1877, Henry O. Flipper, the son of an enslaved Georgian, survived the full four years and graduated. By the end of the century only two others had made it.



See page 164 (facing page) for caption.

Winning the Battle of San Juan Hill

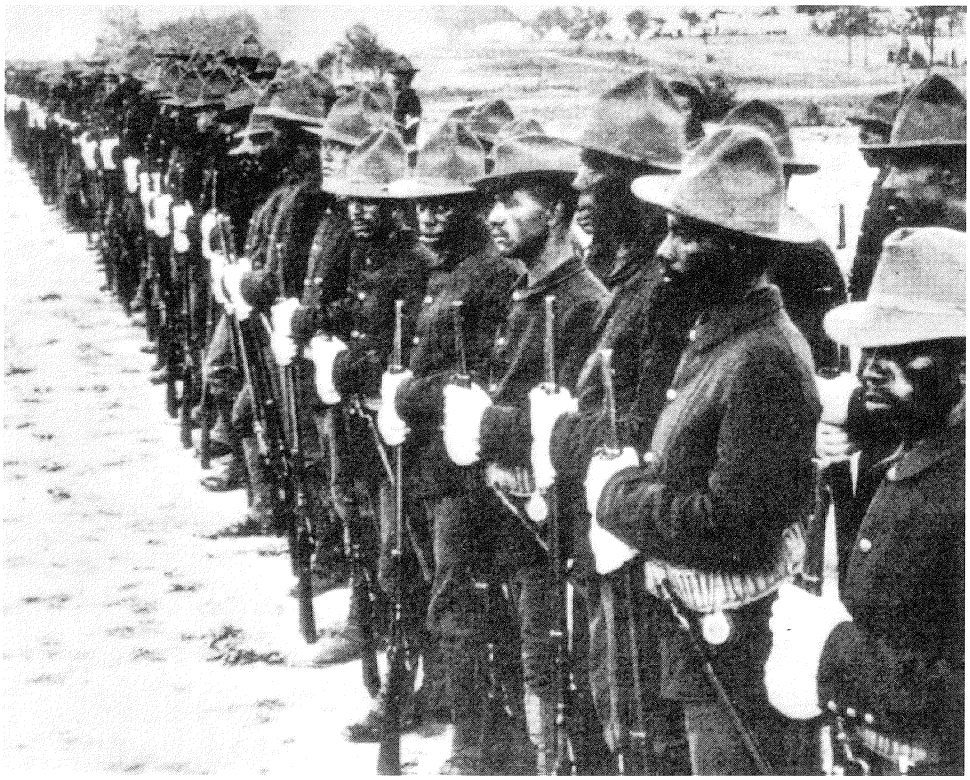
The short war with Spain in 1898 involved African-American soldiers and sailors from the very beginning. The war began with the sinking of the American battleship *Maine* by Spanish forces in the harbor of Havana, Cuba. Among the more than 200 sailors who lost their lives were twenty-two African-American sailors. "Remember the *Maine*!" became the battle cry for the rest of the war. Sadly, few remembered that about one in ten of those lost on the *Maine* were African-Americans.

Most of the action took place in Cuba. The same African-American cavalry units that had gained fame in winning the West played a decisive role. When Teddy Roosevelt led his "Rough Riders" in their victorious charge up San Juan Hill, he found African-American soldiers from the Tenth Cavalry had already taken the hill. They had cleared away much of the opposition. Some soldiers even claimed that the Ninth and Tenth Cavalries saved the Rough Riders from defeat. One said that because he was a Southerner he had always been prejudiced against "the colored man." But the bravery and hard fighting he saw had changed his feelings. He went on to note that their "battle hymn" was "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight."

Not all the bravery and heroics took place under enemy fire. When an epidemic of yellow fever broke out, nearly a hundred African-American soldiers volunteered for nursing duty. They knew full well that they could catch the fatal disease themselves.

Jones Morgan, born in Newberry County, South Carolina, was thought to be the last surviving member of the Ninth Cavalry that helped take San Juan Hill. At the age of fifteen, he ran away from home and joined the Ninth, still known as buffalo soldiers from their frontier days in the American West. Although a South Carolina native, he spent his last years living in Virginia, where he visited schools and taught students about the buffalo soldiers. Chief of Staff General Colin Powell, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Military Services, and President Bush all met and gave honors to this living legend. In October of 1993 at the age of 110, Jones Morgan left this world and joined his fellow brave soldiers.

George Washington, who was born near Columbia in 1831, served with the Ninth and Tenth Cavalries. At the age of 97, he recounted his experiences from the Civil War to World War I. He served his owner, General Wade Hampton, during the Civil War and after the war for twelve years before joining the Army



Soldiers who helped take San Juan Hill after the battle in the Spanish American War. Courtesy of William Loren Katz, Collection, Ethrac Publications, 231 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011, Library of Congress.

himself. Washington claimed to have fought at Havana, where he was wounded and sent home. If this is correct, he would have been in his sixties by that time! He retired with the rank of sergeant. Because he had learned to speak Spanish in Cuba, the military asked him to help communicate with the Spanish-speaking prisoners during World War I. Doubtless he saw a great deal during his long life.

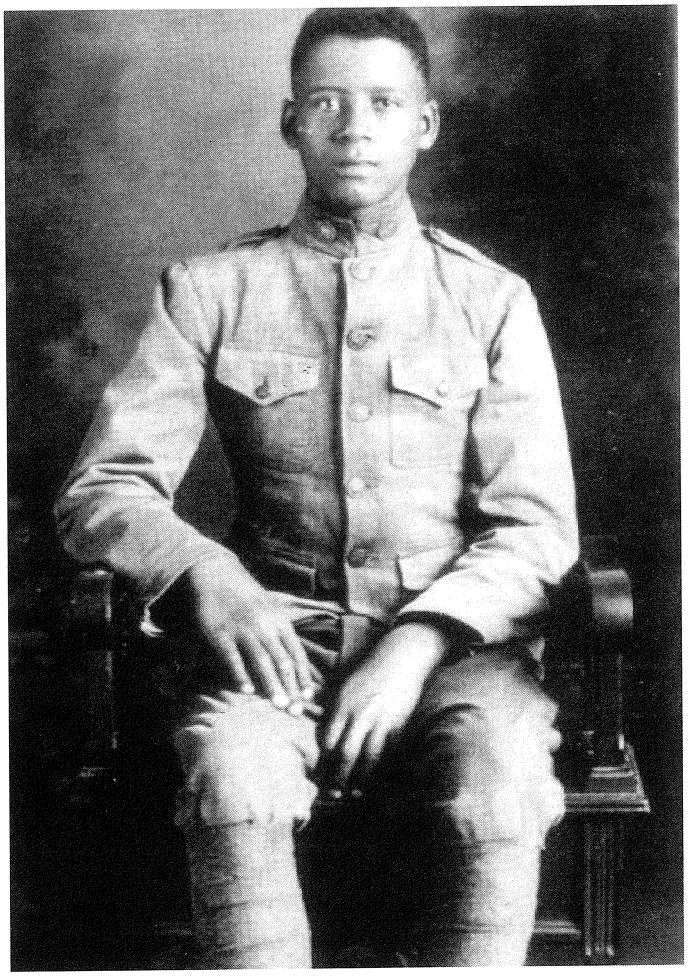
Nearly all Americans remember the battleship *Maine* and swell with pride at the exploits of Teddy Roosevelt. Few have even heard about what African-American soldiers did. They fought bravely to set Cubans free from Spain. Yet they were hardly free from prejudice themselves in the country whose uniforms they proudly wore.

World War I

African-Americans played a large role in the First World War. Many of those who served in the Army from the North were trained on South Carolina bases. Nearly half of all South Carolinians who served in the war were African-Americans.

The hopes of African-Americans were much the same as in the past. Charles Johnson taught school for thirty years and was an officer in the YMCA unit that served African-American troops being trained at Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina. In 1919, he spoke to an African-American audience in Union, South Carolina. Later, he published the speech in a small booklet. He described how he and so many other African-American citizens felt. "The American Negro is proud that he was given the opportunity to preserve Christian civilization and to show what is in him and give good account of himself. The history of the World War cannot be justly written and leave out his very conspicuous and heroic part. The world sees the American Negro in an entirely different light and will give him a chance in life as never before. This is the hope and expectation of all." Sadly, despite all the hopes for a chance, it was not yet to be. Nearly another half century passed before that hope become reality.

The most famous unit with many African-American soldiers from South Carolina was the 371st Infantry Regiment. It was part of an all African-American division. The other three regiments were composed of soldiers from Northern states. The 371st trained at Fort Jackson in late 1917. After only a few weeks of training, young men who had known only farm labor were changed into soldiers. An officer described them as "excellent" in drill, "unbelievably perfect" in handling their rifles, and extremely "proud" of their entire unit.



An unidentified young Columbia resident posing for Richard Roberts in his uniform just after World War I. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, slide B-148 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of Roberts family.

This pride carried over onto the battle fields of Europe less than a year later. The Army assigned them to become part of a famous French division. The "Red Hand Division" used a red hand as its shoulder patch. The 371st fought with such courage and ferocity that the Germans began calling them the "black

devils" and "hell fighters." A white American colonel said that "These men of ours, whom I saw in death on Hill 188, these black men who dignified death, who brought honor to their race and glory to our colors. . .were soldiers who helped to elevate our pride" (Chester D. Heywood, *Negro Combat Troops in the World War: The Story of the 371st Infantry.* New York: AMS Press, 1969, original edition, 1928, p.177). The French awarded the unit a large number of medals for their courage and successes. This included the shooting down of three airplanes with rifle fire. The French erected a monument in a field to commemorate their exploits. Along with names and mottoes, it has the picture of a cotton field and a Palmetto tree, the symbol of South Carolina.

Sometimes, it takes many years to win recognition. Sometimes, recognition comes long after you are gone from this earth. Such was the case of Corporal Freddy Stowers. Stowers was born to a family of seven children on a small Anderson County vegetable farm around the turn of the century. As a youth, he joined the 371st Infantry and made the rank of corporal. On September 28, 1918, he led his men in a charge on a hill held by the Germans. The German gunfire wounded him badly. This did not stop Corporal Stowers. He kept on firing his own weapon and urged his men on until they captured the hill. There he died. Almost seventy-three years later the U.S. military awarded him the Congressional Medal of Honor he deserved. The military had been reluctant to give African-Americans the nation's highest award. Convincing them to do the right thing took a long time. In April of 1991, President George Bush awarded the medal to one of Stowers' sisters who was still living.

The slogan used by American leaders to rally public support for the war was that this was "the war to make the world safe for democracy." Despite their great contributions in the war, African-Americans did not find democracy when they returned home. They were still treated like second-class citizens. In 1935, *The Palmetto Leader,* an African-American newspaper, noted that the nation had built a memorial for white soldiers at a cost of $105,000, then a great sum. Nothing had been done to honor African-Americans who had fought in the "War to End All Wars."

World War II

For much of the Second World War, African-Americans found themselves fighting to get a chance to fight. The military, dominated by white prejudice, was still not ready to offer full equality. Units remained segregated by race. African-Americans found that becoming officers was nearly impossible.

Retired chemist, Edwin R. Russell remembers that at the beginning of the war, he taught classes for the U.S. Army in the chemistry of powder and explosives. The classes, taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C., included 100 blacks and whites. The white students then entered the service as officers, but the black students entered as privates. Unable to persuade the Army to treat African-Americans fairly, Russell left Washington.

Nevertheless, about a million African-Americans served in all branches of the military in World War II. About half a million served overseas where the actual fighting took place. About the same percentage of the armed forces were African-American as African-Americans were of the general population. At the beginning of the war, the military allowed African-Americans to hold only lowly jobs, like kitchen assistants. Even there, they made the most of any chances they had. One young African-American was stationed on a ship docked at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Dorie Miller was assigned to the ship's kitchen, or ship's "mess," to use the naval term. When the Japanese attacked the base, he manned a gun and shot down a number of planes. The military awarded him the Navy Cross. Many observers feel that he really deserved the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Thanks in part to Mary McLeod Bethune, the South Carolina civil rights leader, African-Americans had a chance to do other things. She was a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. She persuaded Mrs. Roosevelt to convince President Roosevelt to expand opportunities for African-Americans in the military. By the end of the war, African-Americans served in all parts of the military. This included tank battalions, artillery, infantry, and officer candidate schools. In the Air Force, they served as pilots. Given these opportunities, African-Americans proved their mettle. Over eighty African-American pilots won the Distinguished Flying Cross.

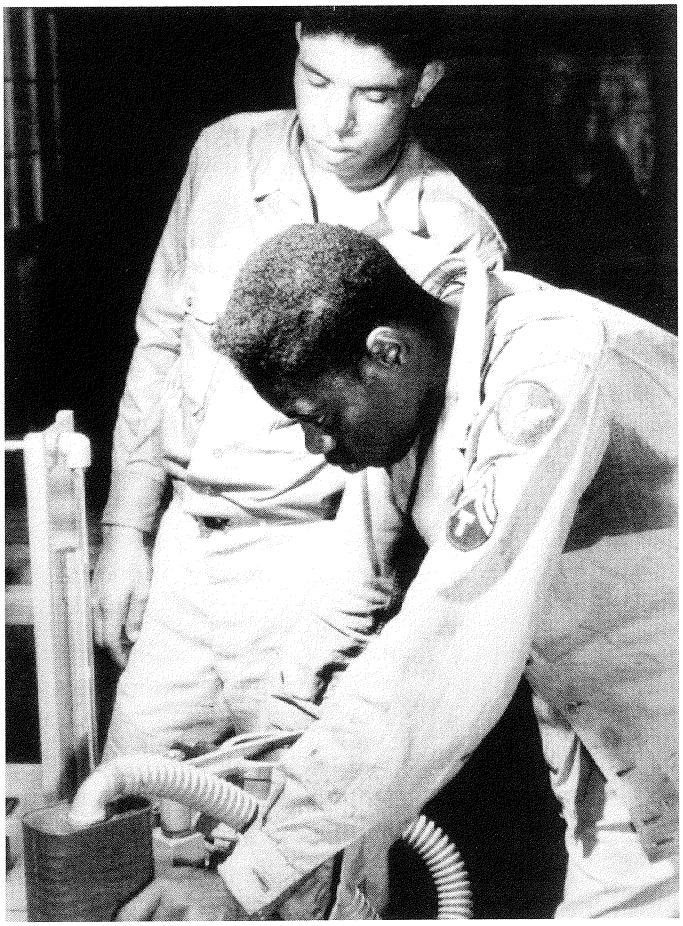
African-Americans had to fight hard to prove that they had the ability to be pilots. One of those who made this possible was Ernest Henderson, who trained the Tuskegee Airmen. Henderson, one of ten children, grew up in a log cabin in Laurens County. His family had little money. As a boy working on the farm, he liked to watch the planes that flew by once in a while. He sold produce from the farm to pay for his high school tuition in Clinton in the 1930s. A bright student and a hard worker, he graduated with honors. Henderson worked his way through college by selling vegetables, getting bottle refunds, and working in the kitchen at Hampton Institute in Virginia.

At this time the military refused to train African-American pilots, believing they could not fly airplanes. As war approached, the military picked six black colleges, including Hampton Institute, to train civilian pilots on an experimental basis. Henderson, a business major, was one of the students they trained.

In 1941 the Defense Department set up the all-black 99th Pursuit Squadron at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Henderson became a flight instructor and then assistant squadron commander. The men gave him the nickname "Pepsi-Cola Henderson" because he did not drink alcohol. Although he wanted to fly in combat, the military asked him to stay and train pilots. He stayed there until the war ended.

When the Tuskegee program began, the armed forces still considered training African-American pilots to be experimental. Henderson and his men always believed that they had to be better than whites in order to prove themselves. At first, African-American pilots were segregated overseas. They had to show the military how good they were. They showed them. Integration of the pilots finally resulted.

After the war, the Tuskegee program became a civilian flight training corporation. Henderson taught there for four years. In 1949, he came to Columbia where he taught pilots and organized a group called the Black Eagles. Henderson was the first African-American man from South Carolina to get a commercial pilot's license and to have ground instructor, flight instructor, and instrument ratings. Later he was a businessman, teacher, assistant principal, and counselor in the schools. His children, all professionals themselves, could be proud of their father, a man who shattered stereotypes.



Soldiers of a chemical unit testing gas masks in July, 1943 in Columbia. Library of Congress LC-USW3 35645.

While Ernest Henderson served his country at home, many others served overseas. There are thousands of stories of bravery and valor. What follows are just a couple of them.

Late in the war after the Allies had invaded Europe, Hitler made a desperate attempt to turn them back. The Nazis massed troops and tanks. They broke through a weak point in the Allied lines in a great battle called the Battle of the Bulge. The Nazis surrounded outnumbered American troops. Americans were cut off from their support. The Germans trapped the famed 101st Airborne paratroopers in the city of Bastogne. This all-white unit was in danger of being wiped out.

Two African-American units came to the rescue, the 183rd combat engineers and the 761st tank battalion. In order to rescue the 101st, they had to build a bridge in an area that was under heavy German fire and airplane attacks. It was the dead of winter. A

heavy snow covered the ground. The African-Americans in the 183rd built that bridge, even though many soldiers died in the effort. With the bridge built, the 761st tank battalion crossed over. It rescued the soldiers of the 101st Airborne. Today, if you should travel to Bastogne, France, you can see one of the tanks still standing in the town square as a monument to this victory.

Later, both the tank battalion and the engineers helped free Jewish prisoners who were still alive in concentration camps. One survivor said that the troops who broke down the gate to free them had both black and white faces, but "for us they were angels."

One of those who entered the concentration camp was Leon Bass, who later earned his doctorate and became a high school principal. Interestingly, his father, who was born in South Carolina in 1891, had also fought in Europe. Bass' father had been a member of the American forces sent to fight Germany in the First World War. Leon Bass remembers the anger and bitterness he felt when he saw his buddies killed in the war. He remembers wondering what he was fighting for when he knew white Americans at home did not think he was good enough to share drinking fountains or restaurants or even seats on the bus. Then he saw the horrors of millions of people being killed in concentration camps because of their race. He understood that we all must fight against racism abroad and at home.

By the end of the war, the 761st had one of the most impressive records of any American unit. With less than 600 men, the men and tanks of the 761st had killed and captured over 20,000 of the enemy. Nearly half of these African-American soldiers received Purple Hearts because of the wounds they suffered in combat.

Toward the end of the war, the military integrated some regular Army units on an experimental basis. Evaluating the experiment, one white officer said that no soldiers he had ever seen had done better under fire than those in the integrated units. Despite this success, the military went back to segregated units immediately after the war. One of the reasons was fear that Southern whites would not accept integrated military bases located in the South. No matter how well African-Americans performed, they were not treated as equals.

Although their role is often ignored, women also played an important part in the war effort. Lieutenant Colonel Charity Edna Adams Early achieved a higher rank in the U.S. military during World War II than any other African-American woman. She was a member of the first Women's Army Auxiliary Corp (WAAC) Officer Training Class and served in the Women's Army Corp for nearly four years. The then Miss Adams served as Company Commander, Station Control and Training Officer, and Battalion Commander in the European Theater of Operations.

Lt. Colonel Charity Edna Adams in uniform in World War II. Courtesy of Charity Edna Adams Early.

This Columbia native was an achiever in other areas of life as well. Her parents, a minister and a teacher, expected her and her brothers and sister to succeed. She learned self respect from her father. In her book, *One Woman's Army,* in 1989, she relates her father's response to a white insurance salesman who insisted on addressing her by her first name,

rather than "Miss." At this time, she was already a college graduate and a teacher. Her father bluntly told the man to cancel the insurance policy and never to return.

She graduated from Wilberforce University in Ohio with a B.A. in mathematics and science. After teaching math and science for four years, she was anxious for other challenges. When the military decided to recruit women so that more men would be available to fight at the front, she volunteered. She served as an officer in charge of training other women for jobs in the service. Military life required some adjustment for women, many of whom had led relatively sheltered lives. The military, in turn, was not sure what to do with the women and had trouble even finding uniforms to fit them. Life was not easy for African-American women, who were segregated even when serving their country. The black women lived in separate quarters from the white women. They experienced prejudice both within and outside the military. On a trip home on the train, Charity Edna Adams was refused service in the dining car. A white officer, also a Southerner, was furious when this happened. He escorted her into the dining room, ate dinner with her, and then escorted her back to her seat. She later recalled him as a true Southern gentleman.

After serving in the United States for several years, the military sent Adams to Europe, where she served in both England and France. Her unit was responsible for distribution of mail and packages. On more than one occasion, she found herself the senior officer in a situation where military personnel were unused to taking orders from either women or African-Americans. One foggy night, Adams was leading a convoy of vehicles from Rouen to Paris. The convoy found itself behind another convoy that had stopped when a piano they were moving fell on a soldier and pinned him down. Major Adams had to assume command and see that the injured soldier reached a hospital. She pulled her vehicle into the lead position. The fog was so thick that no one could see ahead. Two soldiers rode on the front fenders with flashlights. After traveling all night, they finally reached Paris. The injured soldier, who had a broken back, recovered.

Adams decided to leave the service at the end of the war rather than accept an assignment at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Boarding the ship home, she was the senior female officer. Under her command were not only African-American women but also several hundred white nurses. Some of the nurses refused to accept her authority. Adams demonstrated the leadership abilities that had allowed her to rise to the highest position then available to any woman in the Army. She told the women that she was not leaving the ship and that they would sail in twenty minutes. The women could accept her command or disembark. The white nurses backed down. However, when the ship's captain asked Adams to set up a duty roster to take care of seasick passengers, Adams diplomatically asked the white nurse major to handle this. By the end of the voyage, the women had begun to accept each other.

After leaving the military, Adams returned to graduate school and received an M.A. in psychology from the Ohio State University. She then took a position with the Veterans Administration. Later, she served as Dean of Student Personnel Services at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College and Georgia State College. After her marriage, she moved with her husband to Switzerland, where he was studying medicine. With her usual determination, she learned to speak the local language (German) and then studied psychology at the University of Zurich and the Jungian Institute of Analytic Psychology.

Returning to the states, Charity Edna Adams Early began to raise a family and become active in community affairs. This mother of two has given of her time to numerous community activities. A partial list includes volunteering with the YMCA, Urban League, and United Negro College Fund. She is co-director of the Black Leadership Development Program of Dayton, Ohio and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Early is on the board of directors of the United Way, Dayton Power and Light, and Sinclair Community College. She chaired the Montgomery County Human Service Council. She has received many awards. In 1991, Wilberforce University awarded her the Doctor of Humanities degree. Early has been recognized by the Ohio Woman's Hall of

Fame, received a Brotherhood Award from the Dayton Area National Conference of Christians and Jews, and a Public Administrators' "Outstanding Citizen Service in Public Affairs", award. She received a "Black Women Against the Odds" tribute to the top 100 women in Black History sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute.

Other African-American women from South Carolina have followed in Charity Edna Adams Early's footsteps. In 1993, Irene Trowell-Harris, a native of Aiken, became the third female general and first African-American female general in the National Guard. In Washington, D.C., Trowell Harris plays an important leadership role in the Air National Guard.

Korea

By the time of the Korean War in the early 1950s, the military had been desegregated. President Truman had ordered total integration using his powers as commander-in-chief. Blacks and whites served together throughout the war. Although there was some friction, many Southern white men began to learn that differences were only skin deep.

One such white South Carolinian was Melvin Calvert. He was wounded and needed a blood transfusion to live. The medics laid him on a cot next to an African-American soldier who had volunteered to donate his own blood. A tube ran from the arm of the African-American to the arm of Melvin Calvert. Calvert remembers thinking that according to what he had been taught all his life, this was not supposed to work. Yet it did work. He began to question segregation. Calvert eventually became a United Methodist minister. In that role, he began working to bring the races together on Sunday and in the rest of the week.

Vietnam

By the time of the Vietnam War in the 1960s and early 1970s, the Armed Forces were nearly fully integrated from enlisted men through the officer corps. African-Americans from South Carolina and other states served in all parts of the military and at all ranks. The military was probably more integrated than other parts of society. The Vietnam era was a period of great unrest in America. The nation was locked in struggle over the civil rights movement. The movement challenged racial barriers in all parts of life. African-Americans were impatient, and whites were often resentful about that impatience. The murder of Martin Luther King in 1968 increased tensions. The fact that the war did not go well for America added further tension. No one wanted to die in a war we were going to lose.

The men whom the Army drafted took all these tensions with them to Vietnam. In interviews with South Carolina veterans after the war, we can hear the tension and the common ground found by both races. A white veteran complained that African-American soldiers "would band together and do black power things, and I got to feeling real uneasy about them." An African-American veteran from South Carolina questioned the very purpose of the war. "We didn't have nothing against the Vietnamese. I never met them. . .you would go to Vietnam and sacrifice your life and fight for stuff like this and come to the U.S. and get treated like a second-class citizen. You know, that's the hurting part" (from unpublished interviews transcribed with Vietnam veterans by the students of Dr. Robert E. Botsch, University of South Carolina-Aiken).

At the same time, both of these South Carolinians did share common ground. They saw that both races could work and fight for each other rather than against each other when they faced a common danger. Most of the problems in Vietnam between the races took place away from the fields of battle. As the white soldier said, "In combat you don't care if your buddy is red as long as he is OK." The African-American soldier said that where there was fighting against the enemy, "whites and blacks got along nice because of the simple fact that you could go out and somebody could zap you and nobody would ever know what happened."

Ralph H. Johnson cared about his fellow soldiers so much that he gave his life for them. Johnson lived his first eighteen years in Charleston before enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1967. Not quite a year later, he was in Vietnam serving as a scout with a company of fellow Marines. On March 5, 1968, Private First Class Johnson was with two fellow Marines in an observation post overlooking a valley controlled by the enemy. The enemy attacked. A hand grenade landed in their foxhole. In the words of the citation that explained the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor: "Realizing the inherent danger to his two comrades, he shouted a warning and unhesitatingly hurled himself upon the explosive device. When the grenade exploded, Private Johnson absorbed the tremendous

Sergeant Webster Anderson of Winnsboro, South Carolina, wearing the Congressional Medal of Honor. Courtesy of Webster Anderson.

impact of the blast and was killed instantly. His prompt and heroic act saved the life of one marine at the cost of his own and undoubtedly prevented the enemy from penetrating his sector of the patrol's perimeter." Greater love hath no man than this nineteen-year-old South Carolinian.

South Carolina has a second African-American son who earned the Congressional Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. Unlike Ralph Johnson, Sergeant First Class Webster Anderson of the 101st Airborne Division was a career military man. Anderson was lucky enough to live to tell his own story, although at a terrible cost to himself. Born in 1933 in Winnsboro, Anderson joined the Army in Columbia at the age of twenty. He served at many posts and won many awards, including the Master Parachutist Badge.

On October 15, 1967, a large enemy force attacked Anderson's artillery unit. The enemy charged past the first line of defense. Then, Anderson went into action. Again, in the words of the Congressional Medal of Honor citation: "Sergeant Anderson, with complete disregard for his personal safety, mounted the exposed parapet of his howitzer position and became the mainstay of the defense of the battery position. Sergeant Anderson directed devastating direct howitzer fire on the assaulting enemy while providing rifle and grenade defensive fire against the enemy from his exposed position. . . .two enemy grenades exploded at his feet knocking him down and severely wounding him in the legs. Despite excruciating pain and though not able to stand, Sergeant Anderson valorously propped himself on the parapet and continued to direct howitzer fire upon the closing enemy and to encourage his men to fight on. Seeing an enemy grenade land within the gun pit near a wounded member of his gun crew, Sergeant Anderson, heedless of his own safety, seized the grenade and attempted to throw it over the parapet to save his men. As the grenade was thrown from the position, it exploded and Sergeant Anderson was again grievously wounded. Although only partially conscious and severely wounded, Sergeant Anderson refused medical attention and continued to encourage his men. . .and was able to maintain the defense of his own section and to defeat a determined enemy attack."

Although Anderson lost both of his legs and part of an arm, he did recover from his wounds. He moved back to lead an active life with his family in Winnsboro. Anderson is an outgoing man who carries no bitterness for the heavy price he paid. Like thousands of other South Carolina Veterans of Vietnam from all ethnic backgrounds, Anderson is proud to have served his nation.

The Persian Gulf War of 1991

Since Vietnam, the military has become fully integrated as it opened top ranking officer positions to African-Americans. Although tensions still exist, soldiers of all races have more opportunity than ever before. In the Gulf War, units from South Carolina in-

cluded people of all races. They worked well together. They drove Saddam Hussein's army out of Kuwait. The highest ranking officer during the Gulf War was General Colin Powell, an African-American. Some people even talked about nominating him as Vice President of the United States after the war was over.

Lessons

The experience of all these wars teaches important lessons to those who pay careful attention. All citizens want and deserve a chance to serve. We are stronger when we use the talents of all our people, regardless of race or other differences. Thousands of African-Americans from South Carolina along with other Americans have given their lives so that the rest of us can live in a nation that is free and independent. Let us make sure that it really is free. Let us make sure that every human being is free to make the most of her or his life. If we do not, then all those who died in our defense will have died for nothing.